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The Banality of Evil and the Systemic Nature of Stigmatization

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This book is based on a combination of documentary material and narrative reconstruction. In cases where the exact words, motives, or sequence of actions of the participants cannot be established with certainty, the corresponding scenes and dialogues have been recreated by the author. A number of characters are composite, and some specific details have been altered for the sake of narrative cohesion.

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Introduction

“Why Is There So Much Evil in a World Where Everyone Wants Good?”

Have a seat. Let’s imagine we’re in a small café on the outskirts of Paris or Brussels — where a gray drizzle falls outside the window, and inside it smells of burnt coffee and old newspapers. I want to tell you a story that doesn’t make the front pages because it’s too uncomfortable for “respectable society.” We often think of evil as something otherworldly, horned, bursting into our lives with the roar of explosions. But more often than not, it comes quietly.

I remember the story of a man I’ll call Mark. We met when his life was in ruins. He was an ordinary architect from Lyon who loved his wife and two daughters. His “crime” was laughably minor: he started attending a meditation group and studying Eastern philosophy. This didn’t stop him from working, paying taxes, or taking his children to the park. But one day, there was a knock at the door. A neighbor, having heard television scare stories about “cults” and “psychological influence,” filed a report with one of the organizations involved in combating so-called “sectarian deviations.”

A month later, Mark was fired—“as a precaution against reputational risk.” Three months later, his wife, having been

influenced by "psychological consultants," filed for divorce and barred him from seeing the children, claiming in court that he was "brainwashing them." The judge, having no time to delve into the details, relied not on evidence of actual harm, but on the general climate of suspicion that, in France during the 1990s and early 2000s, was fueled by parliamentary reports on "sects." Mark lost everything. Not because of cruelty or madness, but because someone decided they knew how he should believe and what he should think. His life was destroyed in the name of his own "salvation."

As I looked into his empty eyes, I asked myself the question that became the title of this introduction: why, in a world where almost everyone sincerely wishes for good, does there seem to be less of it, while the space around us grows increasingly filled with the icy breath of hatred?

Why, in the twenty-first century, have we surrounded ourselves with gadgets and technologies that sometimes know more about us than we know about ourselves? We are learning to understand how social media and artificial intelligence work, but we have never learned to understand ourselves, those closest to us, or even our neighbors. In the realm of human relationships, we often rely on little more than the tools of psychological manipulation.

Evil, as Hannah Arendt once wrote, can turn out to be frighteningly banal: not necessarily demonic, but often thoughtless, bureaucratic, and mundane. It takes root

where we remain silent in the face of obvious lies. We've grown accustomed to looking for the guilty parties out there — in high-level offices, in geopolitical conspiracies, or in the "corrupting influence" of the internet. It's a very convenient position. It absolves us of responsibility.

But let's be honest, while our coffee is still warm: we're all complicit. Each of us is complicit in the evil that fills the air today. Evil feeds on lies and on our silence. It grows in the soil of our willingness to believe rumors without checking the facts. It thrives when we allow our fears to be manipulated with ease. I'll explain what I mean in more detail below.

We are the very people who forward "alarming messages" through messaging apps without stopping to think about whose fate we may be destroying with a single click. Responsibility for fanning the flames of hatred across the world is distributed among all of us. Every fire has not only those who throw wood onto it, but also those who professionally hold the match.

Finish your coffee. It's time for us to set out. What you're about to read may change your view of the world forever. After all, the only way to stop evil is to bring it into the light. And let's start right now.

Chapter 1. The Labeled Man. The Roots of Psychological Discord

Imagine an ordinary room in a Tokyo apartment. Walls, a ceiling, a locked door. Behind that door, a man spent twelve years. Not twelve days, not twelve months, but twelve long years erased from his life. His name is Toru Goto. He wasn't kidnapped for ransom, nor was he hidden by political opponents. He was illegally detained by his own relatives, acting in collusion with so-called deprogrammers. Toru's only "crime" was that he did not believe what these "experts" dictated.

When the door finally opened and he stepped out into freedom, he was emaciated after years of confinement without proper access to the outside world, fresh air, or movement. This is not the plot of a chilling thriller. It is the reality of our time, unfolding in one of the world's most technologically advanced megacities. And while we sit here drinking this coffee and discussing progress, something similar may be happening right now behind other locked doors.

Words are the most terrifying weapon when they fall into the hands of those who have elevated hatred to a profession. We've grown accustomed to thinking that human destiny is protected by laws, the presumption of innocence, and common sense, but all these barriers crumble to dust the moment the short, cutting, and merciless word "cult" or "sect" — depending on the country and context — is uttered. This label functions as a social boundary: it instantly separates a person from society, deprives them of the right to sympathy, and transforms yesterday's respected neighbor, talented colleague, or loving father into a dangerous outcast.

The mechanism of this alienation is strikingly simple and monstrously effective. First comes a glimmer of suspicion, sparked by some "expert" comment in the press or a denunciation by a "vigilant" activist. Then it intensifies into newspaper headlines and television reports, and suddenly the world around the person begins to crumble rapidly. Friends stop calling; at work, they politely but firmly ask the person to submit a resignation letter "to avoid reputational risks"; and the family turns into a battlefield where loved ones are pitted against one another by professional manipulators promising to "save" them from the cult's influence.

In this whirlwind of stigmatization, truth ceases to matter — only the label matters, which, like a brand, signals to everyone around them this person can be persecuted,

their rights can be stripped away, and their fate can be shattered without a twinge of conscience.

There are organizations whose business is fear. Literally. Their power grows not from peace and mutual understanding, but from chaos. Peaceful dialogue between people of different views is not in their interest, because in a world where people trust one another, they are out of a job. I'm talking about European anti-cult networks. They're all over the world right now.

For decades, they presented themselves as respectable defenders of democracy. But if you start digging deeper — as I did — you'll discover that behind the façade of "protecting citizens" lies a system built on defamation and state-funded hate. This is not a conspiracy theory. These are hard facts, confirmed by court rulings that these organizations are so diligently trying to hide.

In 2024 and 2025 alone, the Paris Administrative Court found the anti-cult organization MIVILUDES guilty of defamation on several occasions. The judges stated outright: this state body disseminated false information without any evidence to back it up.

And what about financial accountability? In 2024, the French Court of Auditors published a report that should have made the walls blush in any respectable society. It revealed that millions of euros in state subsidies, which were supposed to go toward "protection against cults," were distributed among affiliated organizations without any

meaningful oversight, sometimes to projects that existed only on paper. This is a massive business built on the stigmatization of people.

International organizations, such as the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), have long been sounding the alarm, criticizing these groups for inciting hostility and directly interfering with freedom of conscience. But the network continues to operate. Why? Because fear is the most effective tool of control, and we continue to fuel it.

It is striking that most modern legal systems lack a clear legal definition of the term “cult.” These terms belong not to the realm of law, but to the realm of propaganda and personal animosity. Nevertheless, the fates of millions of people today depend on the opinions of a handful of self-appointed “cult experts.”

A sharp, almost painful question arises: where on earth do they learn to be such arbiters of human fate? Which universities issue diplomas that allow them to peer into other people’s souls and pass judgment on them? Who are these people, endowed with an almost divine power to decide which faith is true and which is criminal? Where is this higher authority that granted them the mandate to destroy other people’s lives?

Upon closer inspection, it turns out that this “expert” status is often built on a foundation of dubious courses, personal insecurities, and a fanatical conviction of their own

infallibility. These people create their own organizations, bestow grandiose titles upon themselves, and begin advising courts and intelligence agencies, all under the guise of concern for “spiritual security.”

The most striking aspect of this scheme is that the very organizers of these persecution campaigns often commit acts for which anyone else would face a lengthy prison sentence. They organize kidnappings, engage in defamation, and incite hatred on a national scale, yet remain completely unpunished. They have created a system in which a crime committed in the name of “combating sects” is considered a virtue, while the peaceful prayer of others is labeled extremism.

In Russia, this form of hatred has taken on particularly grotesque features, permeating certain segments of the law enforcement system and expert communities. A leading role is played by the so-called “cult experts,” led by Alexander Dvorkin and his like-minded colleagues, who have spent years laying the ideological groundwork for repression.

The law on extremism, created to combat real terrorism, has turned into a bludgeon used against some of the most peaceful and law-abiding citizens. People are being sentenced to lengthy prison terms simply for reading the Bible together, singing psalms, or discussing their spiritual values. Each such case is not just a dry file in an archive; it is the lives of real people torn apart — people who were part of society just yesterday, but today find themselves in

penal colonies and pretrial detention centers simply because their religious beliefs did not align with the official line of these self-appointed "spiritual guardians."

If we turn our attention to Japan, we see that even in this cradle of technological progress, the ancient instincts to persecute those with different beliefs remains alive to this day. Here, the anti-cult movement has for decades practiced what, in legal terms, would be classified as unlawful deprivation of liberty, and in some cases kidnapping, but was euphemistically called "deprogramming."

Let us recall Toru Goto, who was held captive by his own relatives for more than twelve years — approximately twelve years and five months — with the involvement of deprogrammers. And this is not an isolated case. The cases of Koji Seo and Yuko Seo (abduction and detention in 2014; a Japanese court later awarded them compensation in a civil lawsuit) show that an entire industry of forced "reprogramming" has taken shape in the country.

Following the tragic assassination of Shinzo Abe, this industry shifted into overdrive. The crime of a single individual driven to despair became the pretext for an unprecedented state offensive against an entire organization — the Unification Church. Instead of investigating the causes of the killer's personal tragedy, the authorities and society, spurred on by anti-cult activists, turned against thousands of innocent believers.

People are being forced to quit their jobs, their families are falling apart under the weight of public hatred, and the very existence of the organization is being called into question in courts that have suddenly forgotten the principles of religious freedom, yielding to public pressure.

South Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic also demonstrated how easily fear of disease can become fuel for religious intolerance. The Shincheonji Church of Jesus became the perfect scapegoat. When the virus began to spread, anti-cult groups and the media quickly directed public anger at the believers. They were accused of every mortal sin, and their personal information was exposed, making them targets of physical violence.

Young people were kicked out of their homes, colleagues were harassed in group chats, and the group's leader was arrested live on air amid the approving roar of a crowd demanding blood. Fear was skillfully channeled into hatred of "others." This was social stigmatization in its purest and most brutal form, where the right to health for some became a justification for the destruction of the human dignity and freedom of others.

People were forced to hide their faith, as in the days of the persecution of the early Christians, fearing the loss not only of their jobs but also of their personal safety on the streets of their own cities.

In this country, the mechanisms of stigmatization, having evolved into a well-oiled industry of personal

destruction, have found fertile ground and taken shape in the activities of the Cult Counseling Center (CCCK). This organization, operating under the auspices of influential Presbyterian churches, has for decades honed the practice of so-called “forced conversion.”

Hidden in the shadows of official reports and thunderous sermons lies a reality in which human life is worth less than adherence to dogma.

In the annals of this struggle, somewhere at the intersection of truth and deliberately spread rumors, the name “Kim Eun-seong” occasionally surfaces; however, history has preserved for us the real name of the victim whose death became a symbol of humanity’s collapse before fanaticism. Her name was Gu Ji-in.

January 2018 became, for twenty-seven-year-old Gu Ji-in, the moment when her familiar world collapsed, giving way to a nightmare orchestrated by professional ideologues of hatred. It all began long before that fateful date, when pastors involved in forced conversion programs, according to reports from human rights and religious organizations, had been exerting pressure on her family. Using classic intimidation tactics, they convinced the girl’s parents that their daughter was in the clutches of a “deadly cult” and that her soul needed to be saved immediately, at any cost.

Under the influence of these counselors, the parents decided on extreme measures. The girl was forcibly taken to a remote pension in Hwasun, South Jeolla Province. This

place, hidden from prying eyes, turned into a private prison where she was to undergo “deprogramming” sessions. For several days, the girl was kept in complete isolation.

Gu Ji-in showed a resilience that was not part of the “rescuers’” plans. When psychological pressure failed to yield results, physical coercion was employed. The climax came on January 9, 2018.

In an attempt to suppress their daughter’s resistance and silence her during another episode of distress, the parents, acting on the “consultants’” general instructions regarding the need for strict control, tied the girl up and taped her mouth shut. In the cramped quarters of the pension, amid an atmosphere of fanatical fervor, Gu Ji-in began to suffocate. The result was severe hypoxic brain damage. She died without ever regaining consciousness, a victim of the very system that had promised to “save” her.

The South Korean legal system’s response to this murder was a prime example of the cynicism and hypocrisy characteristic of anti-cult networks worldwide. When the case went to trial, the full weight of the charges fell solely on the parents, driven to madness by propaganda of hatred. The judicial machine chose to turn a blind eye to those who had placed the ropes and duct tape in these people’s hands — the pastors of the Cult Counseling Center (CCCK).

The ideologues and organizers of the abduction, those who coordinated the “deprogramming” process and received

hefty fees for it, walked away scot-free. In court, they appeared merely as “well-meaning consultants” who “simply offered advice.” Their status as defenders of traditional faith and protectors of society against “cults” served as a reliable shield.

While the parents mourned the daughter they had killed and prepared for prison terms, the pastors continued their activities, collecting donations for the “fight against cults” and seeking out new victims for their sessions of forced conversion.

Gu Ji-in’s death sparked an unprecedented international outcry. Tens of thousands of people took to the streets of Seoul and other cities around the world, demanding a ban on the practice of forced conversion and that the true culprits behind the tragedy — the anti-cult actors — be held accountable. The United States Department of State, in its reports on religious freedom, has repeatedly cited this case as a flagrant example of human rights violations.

However, within South Korea itself, a powerful lobby of Presbyterian churches and their affiliated anti-cult centers managed to silence the voices of human rights advocates. Not only was the Cult Counseling Center (CCCK) not disbanded, but it also strengthened its position by portraying any criticism directed at it as an attack on Christian values.

This striking resemblance to European anti-cult organizations confirms the thesis of a unified coordinating

center and the common roots of this movement: when violence is committed for the sake of a “righteous” cause, it ceases to be considered a crime in the eyes of the system.

Organizations like FECRIS in Europe, along with its numerous branches in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and other countries across the continent, as well as anti-cult initiatives in Australia and the U.S., operate within a shared ideology based on the opposition between “normal religion” and “cults.” They exchange information, rhetoric, and expert approaches, sharing techniques for manipulating courts and public opinion, all while presenting themselves under the banner of protecting families and democratic values.

This resembles a transnational network and an environment of mutual legitimization that receives funding and political support by selling the state the illusion of control over “spiritual threats.” In Germany, these centers operate in several states as advisory bodies on issues related to “sects” and “worldview communities,” which critics view as a parallel system of surveillance and stigmatization; in the U.S., “deprogramming” groups have largely disappeared in their former form, but the practice of anti-cult counseling has persisted in more respectable guises.

The essence, however, remains the same — depriving individuals of the right to choose their own path. This network destroys lives everywhere, creating a world in which any deviation from the generally accepted “norm” of

faith is considered a pathology requiring immediate and ruthless treatment.

An examination of the interactions within the anti-cult milieu inevitably leads to the realization that incidents of persecution, whether in Europe, Russia, or East Asia, are not isolated acts of fanaticism, but rather the result of the operations of a tightly coordinated international network.

One of the organizations within the European anti-cult network is the European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Sectarianism. An analysis of FECRIS's activities over the past decades reveals a profound erosion of its professed humanistic values, which has been most clearly manifested in the formation of a lasting alliance with totalitarian regimes.

Of particular significance in this context is the report "Sympathy for the Devil: The Anti-Cult Federation FECRIS and Its Support for Russian and Chinese Repression of Religion," published in *The Journal of CESNUR* in 2022. This document marked an important milestone in the critique of the mechanisms through which, according to the authors of the article, a Western non-governmental organization has become an effective propaganda tool for the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Russian security agencies. According to these researchers, FECRIS's relationship with the People's Republic of China represents a characteristic and illustrative example of a partnership in which both sides benefit from the instrumentalization of hatred.

Since the early 2000s, there has been a systematic convergence between European anti-cultists and the China Anti-Cult Association (CACA), which, according to international investigations, is linked to the party-state apparatus of the PRC. Within this relationship, FECRIS provides China with the "Western expertise" it needs to justify mass human rights violations, while the Chinese side provides the anti-cult movement with platforms for public appearances, symbolic legitimacy, and joint forums.

This cooperation can be traced back at least to November 2000, when representatives of the French anti-cult movement—including Jean-Pierre Bousquet, speaking on behalf of the CCMM and FECRIS—participated in the "International Symposium on Destructive Cults" in Beijing. Since then, contacts between European anti-cult activists and Chinese entities linked to the anti-sectarian campaign against "xie jiao" have continued and strengthened.

One of the darkest chapters of this partnership is the public reproduction and legitimization of the rhetoric used by Beijing against Falun Gong and other banned movements. Faced with international condemnation for its practices of persecution, torture, and allegations of forced organ harvesting, the Chinese authorities found in certain FECRIS officials convenient external conduits for their anti-cult arguments.

Key figures in the federation, such as longtime Vice President Alexander Dvorkin and FECRIS executive board

member Luigi Corvaglia, have repeatedly acted as mouthpieces for Chinese propaganda. Alexander Dvorkin, as an invited "expert" at conferences in Beijing in 2008, then in Wuhan in 2016, and in Harbin in 2017, publicly legitimized repressive measures using dehumanizing rhetoric. The comparison of religious movements to "cancer cells," which was presented to Chinese audiences, served as a direct justification for the policy of "eradication"—a metaphor that transforms living people into a biological threat that must be eliminated.

In turn, Luigi Corvaglia published texts that critics viewed as repeating or defending Chinese anti-cult narratives. According to reports by researchers and journalists, some of his materials were subsequently translated and disseminated on resources associated with the China Anti-Cult Association. This process of "expert validation" operates consistently: the Chinese association uses statements by FECRIS leaders for domestic consumption, convincing Chinese citizens that the entire civilized world approves of the fight against the "sectarian contagion," while FECRIS in Europe and its affiliated authors frequently cite the Chinese experience as an example of a harsh and "effective" response to religious minorities.

The 2022 CESNUR report emphasizes that such activities go far beyond academic discussions, and the authors of the article explicitly interpret them as moral and ideological complicity in grave human rights violations. Support from FECRIS provides the Chinese authorities with

a moral alibi, allowing them to characterize any calls for the protection of human rights as interference in their internal affairs and the defense of "dangerous criminals." This constitutes participation in the creation and dissemination of an ideological justification for "special" camps and forced ideological re-education affecting millions of people.

The influence of this transnational network extends to Australia, where the organization "Cult Information and Family Support Inc." (CIFS) serves as an ideological partner. Contrary to common perception, CIFS is listed on the FECRIS website as an "associated organization," meaning a structure formally affiliated with the federation. The nature of their interaction points to CIFS's genuine integration into a broader methodological and strategic framework.

This cooperation takes place through the constant exchange of "expertise," the participation of Australian activists in FECRIS international conferences, and the introduction of anti-cult rhetoric concerning "high-demand groups," "cult-like relationships," and related concepts into the Australian legal and media landscape. Cult Information and Family Support Inc. acts as a local conduit for anti-cult ideas, adapting the aggressive rhetoric of European and Russian "cult experts" to the conditions of the Anglo-Saxon legal system. This exchange of approaches and arguments allows the anti-cult movement to maintain global coherence, as the same discredited psychological theories migrate from reports issued by the French MIVILUDES to

publications by Russian radicals and then into the methodological recommendations of Australian activists.

Particular attention in any analysis of Australian anti-cult activism should be paid to its stance toward events in China, which can be characterized as a form of de facto complicity expressed through a conspicuous lack of systematic criticism. Australian activists from Cult Information and Family Support Inc. and affiliated structures, who present themselves as uncompromising defenders of individual freedom and advocates for victims of "cult violence," display a striking blindness when it comes to egregious human rights violations in the People's Republic of China.

While the world's largest human rights organizations — Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and United Nations experts — publish detailed reports on torture, extrajudicial executions, and allegations of forced organ harvesting from Falun Gong practitioners, the Australian anti-cult community remains silent. This silence is a deliberate political choice. Acknowledging the facts of state-sponsored repression in China would require them to disavow their ties with FECRIS and admit the criminality of the methods used by those "experts" on whose work they base their activities. Thus, in the interest of corporate solidarity and the preservation of their "expert status," Australian anti-cultists become complicit in the normalization of totalitarian violence.

This phenomenon of silence exposes a fundamental contradiction within the anti-cult movement: while proclaiming its goal to be the "protection of human rights" from mythical threats posed by religious groups, it in fact supports real, documented, and widespread violence perpetrated by state apparatuses. For CIFS and FECRIS, the life of a believer has value only if it can be used as a tool against an undesirable organization. If, however, a believer becomes a victim of the state apparatus with which anti-cultists have established ideological or organizational ties, that person effectively ceases to exist within their legal and ethical framework. Such selective compassion turns anti-cult activity into a form of political censorship and social engineering, where "expert opinion" is exchanged for access, recognition, and mutual legitimization with repressive regimes.

We have examined the situation in only a few geographic locations, but in reality, anti-cult ideology has already taken root in virtually every country, creating an atmosphere of suspicion and intolerance. Key nodes closely interact with similar structures. They support one another at international forums, legitimize the repressive practices of authoritarian regimes by providing "Western expertise," and effectively launder the reputations of governments that engage in mass persecution on the basis of religious belief. The essence and goals of these groups remain unchanged regardless of whether they operate in liberal Europe, conservative Asia, or the post-Soviet space.

To understand how this mechanism of suppression and destruction works, we must once again turn to the very foundation of anti-cult rhetoric—the term "cult." In academic circles, this issue has long been the subject of intense debate, which ultimately led to the realization that there is simply no scientific consensus regarding this definition. In his seminal 2000 work, the distinguished scholar Philip Jenkins convincingly argued that the word "cult" has completely lost its analytical value in contemporary discourse. According to Jenkins, the term has acquired such deeply ingrained, instinctively negative connotations that it can no longer be used as an objective socio-scientific descriptor.

Philip Jenkins emphasizes that today "cult" is an exclusively derogatory term, a kind of linguistic black mark used by the enemies of a particular group to delegitimize it. In a scientific sense, using this word is tantamount to using a slur: it says nothing about the group's internal structure or beliefs, but reveals a great deal about the bias of the person who uses it. Thus, the term has become a marker of "otherness," separating "us" —the proper and normal—from "them"—the dangerous and deviant.

This idea is further developed by another prominent sociologist of religion and law, James T. Richardson, who proposes an even **s**tricter and more pragmatic conceptualization. Richardson calls the "cult" label an ideological and legally dangerous tool that should not be used in legislative and judicial practice due to its

subjectivity and lack of a legal definition. It is not merely a word, but a tool possessing destructive power in the legal and social spheres. When a group is labeled a “cult,” there is an automatic shift in how the state and society perceive that group.

This weapon is used primarily to dehumanize the group’s members. As soon as an organization is labeled a “cult,” its followers cease to be regarded in the public consciousness as full-fledged citizens with their own free will; they are reduced to “victims of brainwashing” or “zombified adherents.”

The social weapon of the “cult” label prepares the ground on which human rights violations begin to be perceived as “necessary security measures” or “humanitarian aid.” The problem of definition here runs into an insurmountable legal impasse.

It is legally impossible to draw a clear, verifiable line separating a “cult” from a “religion.” If we attempt to use criteria such as the presence of a charismatic leader, deep devotion among followers, specific rituals, or the requirement of financial support, we will inevitably find that virtually all world religions, at various stages of their development, fall under such definitions.

Any attempt to formulate a law punishing “cult activity” inevitably turns into legal arbitrariness, since the criteria remain inherently subjective. Ultimately, the decision about whether a group is a “cult” boils down not to facts or proven

offenses, but to the personal animosity and bias of self-proclaimed experts.

In this legal vacuum, the law ceases to be an instrument of justice and becomes an instrument of censorship, where expert opinion replaces the presumption of innocence. At the heart of this process lies a fundamental logical fallacy and psychological bias known in logic as *special pleading* or the policy of double standards.

This is a paradigm that can be described by the formula: "We are the true religion and tradition; they are a dangerous cult and sect." Traditional or dominant religious groups often use this mechanism to eliminate competitors in the "market of meaning." In their eyes, intense prayer in a traditional church is a manifestation of piety, while the same intense prayer in a new group is a sign of mental disorder or manipulation. Donations to an established church are a virtue, while contributions to a new religious movement are considered a form of economic exploitation.

Dominant structures monopolize the spiritual sphere, using anti-cult rhetoric as a shield against any competition.

The application of double standards allows society to ignore the fact that the methods for which new groups are criticized have been practiced for centuries in mainstream institutions. But when these methods are used by an "outsider," they are declared criminal.

Such a strategy is not only unjust but also extremely dangerous for democracy, as it sets a precedent for selective justice. If the state assumes the role of arbiter in matters of faith, determining which beliefs are "acceptable" and which are "destructive," it thereby nullifies the very idea of freedom of conscience.

As a result, we end up with a situation where the label "cult" serves a single purpose: the creation of a spiritual monopoly. This turns religious life into a tightly controlled ghetto, where only those who are willing to fit into the framework imposed by the authorities and dominant groups have a right to exist.

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The mechanism of social engineering that transforms yesterday's neighbor into an existential threat is the result of subtle psychological manipulation that draws upon the deepest, most archaic layers of the human psyche. To understand exactly how "cult experts" turn peaceful citizens into objects of collective hatred, we must move beyond purely legal frameworks and turn to one of the most illustrative — and, at the same time, one of the most disturbing — experiments in the history of social psychology.

This experiment, known as the "Robbers Cave Experiment," was conducted in 1954 by Muzafer Sherif and his colleagues. It vividly demonstrated that neither centuries-old grievances nor racial differences are necessary

for the emergence of genuine, even bloodthirsty, hostility between people.

All it takes is an artificially created division between "us" and "them" and a skillfully inflamed sense of competition. Muzafer Sherif, a man who had experienced the horrors of ethnic conflict in his youth, spent his entire life searching for an answer to the question: why do normal, mentally healthy people suddenly begin to hate one another to such an extent that they are willing to commit violence? At Robbers Cave State Park in Oklahoma, he created a miniature model of human society.

The participants were twenty-two boys, approximately eleven years old, mostly from white, middle-class Protestant families who had not previously known one another. These were not troubled teenagers or children from dysfunctional families; on the contrary, the researchers conducted a careful selection process, choosing what they considered the "quintessence of normality" — socially and academically well-adjusted children from stable families. The fact that the boys were strangers to one another eliminated the factor of preexisting personal animosity. Muzafer Sherif wanted to demonstrate that the very structure of intergroup interaction could generate conflict almost out of nothing.

In the first phase of the experiment, the boys were divided into two groups of eleven and housed in different parts of the camp, so that for the first few days they were

completely unaware of each other's existence. During this period, a group identity began to form. The boys went on hikes together, prepared meals, built shelters and camp infrastructure, and settled into "their" territory.

Very quickly, a clear hierarchy emerged within each group, with its own leaders and their own rules. The groups chose their own names: while some became the "Eagles," others became the "Rattlesnakes."

This was a period of ingroup solidarity, during which each member of the group felt like part of something larger and meaningful. However, the psychological trap had already been set.

As soon as the groups became aware of the existence of the "others," the atmosphere in the camp changed instantly, even before the first direct confrontation took place. The phrase "they're on our field" or "they're using our beach" became the first warning sign. Muzafer Sherif noted a striking fact: the mere awareness of another group's existence immediately triggered a mechanism of territoriality and suspicion.

When the second phase of the experiment began — the phase of direct competition — the situation rapidly spiraled out of control. The researchers, acting as camp administrators, organized a series of competitions: baseball, tug-of-war, and other contests. The prizes were tempting, but only one side could win them. This artificially created

scarcity of resources became the catalyst for an explosion of aggression.

The “healthy competitive spirit” that educators love to talk about evaporated within just two days. It was replaced by open hatred.

The “Rattlesnakes” and the “Eagles” began exchanging insults, which quickly escalated into open hostility. The Eagles burned their opponents’ flag. In response, the Rattlesnakes carried out a nighttime raid on the Eagles’ camp, overturned beds, scattered personal belongings, and stole the group leader’s jeans to use as a trophy banner.

Yesterday’s “model children” had turned into gangs planning acts of sabotage and ambushes.

It is important to note how the perception of reality changed: each group began to create a heroic image of itself and a demonic image of “the enemy.” The Eagles convinced themselves that they were a bastion of morality and piety because they prayed before meals, while the Rattlesnakes were seen as “dirty hooligans” and “foul-mouthed troublemakers.”

Any action by their opponents was interpreted as treacherous, while their own aggressive acts were viewed as justified retaliation.

Dehumanization occurred rapidly: the opponent ceased to be perceived as just another boy; he became a “stranger,” an “enemy,” a being of a lower order to whom

the usual rules of compassion no longer applied. When the conflict reached its peak and the fights became so violent that the staff had to intervene to prevent serious injuries, Muzafer Sherif moved on to the third stage — seeking ways to achieve reconciliation.

And here he discovered another important pattern. Simple activities, such as shared meals or watching movies, not only failed to help but actually provoked new clashes. The adversaries used these gatherings solely to throw food at each other and hurl new insults. The hostility was so deeply ingrained in their worldview that ordinary contact only reinforced their negative stereotypes.

The only thing that managed to break down the barrier of hatred was the introduction of "shared goals" — shared objectives that were vital for both groups to achieve and impossible to accomplish alone. A staged breakdown of the water supply system forced the boys to unite. Thirst proved stronger than ideological differences. The joint search for the malfunction, the collective effort to clean the reservoir, and, later, the effort to pull out the "stuck" truck carrying provisions gradually began to blur the boundaries between the groups.

By the end of the experiment, yesterday's enemies were sitting around the same campfire, and the Rattlesnakes used their honestly earned prize money to buy milkshakes for the Eagles. This ending seems optimistic, but if we apply the lessons of the Robbers Cave Experiment to the modern

context of anti-cultism, we will see a far less uplifting picture.

Unlike Sherif's experiment, where the researchers ultimately sought reconciliation, modern "cult experts" and anti-cult activists often focus primarily on intensifying social division and reinforcing the image of an enemy. What we observe today in the activities of organizations like FECRIS or in the campaigns of Alexander Dvorkin is no longer a scientific experiment, but rather a political and media-driven practice in which mechanisms of intergroup hostility are used as a tool of public pressure.

Anti-cult activists act as the very "researchers" who manipulate the environment, but with one crucial difference: they never move on to the stage of reconciliation. Their power and funding depend directly on how deeply society is divided and how strongly ordinary people fear the so-called "sectarian threat." They artificially create a sense of competition over resources — whether over spiritual influence, family unity, or financial stability — and instill in the public the idea that "those others" (members of religious minorities) are trying to take what supposedly belongs to "us."

In this context, the parallel with the Robbers Cave Experiment becomes disturbingly accurate.

Just as the camp participants learned in a matter of days to see their peers as "stinkers" and "scoundrels," modern society, under the influence of anti-cult

propaganda, begins to perceive peaceful believers as a social threat. The term “totalitarian cult,” used by anti-cult activists, is nothing more than a psychological trigger that activates a process of dehumanization.

Once this label is applied, a person ceases to be seen as an individual, a citizen, or a neighbor. They become part of a “hostile group,” a destructive element, a “cancerous cell” in the social body. At that moment, law, logic, and morality recede into the background.

If the boys in Oklahoma considered it a virtue to steal other people’s belongings and destroy each other’s living spaces, then modern anti-cult activists consider it a virtue to engage in public stigmatization, destroy reputations, and, in a number of documented cases, support deprogramming practices

The mechanism for creating an image of the enemy in anti-cult discourse operates along the same lines as in Sherif’s experiment, but on a much larger scale. Any action taken by the targeted group, even the most well-intentioned, is interpreted through a lens of suspicion.

This closely resembles the way the experiment participants saw virtue in their own group and, above all, vice in their rivals, even when the behavior of both sides was similar. Anti-cult activists deliberately undermine mechanisms of social integration.

In the Robbers Cave Experiment, the groups were able to reconcile when they realized they shared common interests. Anti-cult ideology, on the other hand, does everything it can to eliminate the possibility of dialogue. It erects an "information cordon" around minorities, presenting only distorted, frightening images in the media.

As a result, ordinary citizens develop the false impression that they know everything about "cults," even though in reality they see only a caricature created by professional manipulators.

This creates a situation in which society is divided not by real conflicts of interest, but by artificially manufactured fear. We see how normal, decent people begin to approve of repression, prison sentences for reading books, and the separation of families because an image of the "enemy" has already been formed in their minds — an enemy that must be suppressed at any cost for the sake of the "common good."

In our reality, the role of "camp personnel" is often assumed by state institutions and law enforcement agencies, which, instead of defusing conflict, become active participants in it.

In Russia, this manifests itself in the use of anti-extremism legislation against peaceful religious communities; in Japan, in tolerance toward kidnappers and deprogrammers; and in France, in state subsidies or

institutional support for organizations engaged in harassment campaigns.

Anti-cultists masterfully exploit the human tendency toward tribalism, transforming the natural desire to protect "one's own" into aggressive persecution of "the other." They create a "zero-sum" situation in which the security of traditional society is portrayed as possible only through the complete destruction or marginalization of minorities.

A deep analysis of these psychological mechanisms shows that the aggressive mass behavior we observe toward Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientologists, or Shincheonji followers is not a spontaneous societal reaction to "danger." It is the result of the long-term implantation of hatred into people's minds. When people in South Korea demanded the arrest of believers during the pandemic, they were acting not out of a rational understanding of epidemiology, but out of the same instinct that drove the boys in Robbers Cave to overturn their opponents' beds.

Fear of the virus was merely a convenient pretext for acting out an already established image of the enemy. It is important to understand that the image of the enemy created by anti-cult networks is a mirror image of their own methods. By accusing other groups of "brainwashing" and manipulation, they themselves use the most powerful tools of psychological pressure on public opinion. By accusing them of destroying families, they themselves sanction violence within families through deprogramming. This is a

standard projection mechanism that allows the aggressor to feel like both a victim and a protector at the same time.

In "Robbers Cave," the boys from the "Eagles" group sincerely believed they were defending their camp when they raided the "Rattlesnakes." Modern anti-cultists do exactly the same thing—they hide behind slogans of "defending democracy" and "civil rights" when, in reality, they are undermining the very foundations of democratic coexistence.

The consequences of such activity are catastrophic. When society becomes accustomed to thinking in terms of "sects" and "cults," it loses its capacity for critical thinking and empathy. Legal discourse is replaced by a mob mentality, incited by "expert opinions."

We are witnessing the degradation of social bonds: people begin to fear their neighbors, relatives fear one another, and the state fears its own citizens who hold different views. We are creating a world where fear is stronger than the law, and the opinion of a self-proclaimed "expert" is more important than human life.

We are divided not because we have different beliefs or rituals, but because a handful of people have made hatred their profession, skillfully playing on our basest instincts, revealed in the forests of Oklahoma more than half a century ago.

Muzafer Sherif's experiment showed how easily humanity can be broken down in children by placing them in conditions of conflict. But it also showed that the path to peace lies through the recognition of our shared humanity and common goals. The only way to break free from this imposed algorithm of hatred is to see the living face of a human being behind the image of the "enemy" and to realize that our common "superordinate goal" today is to defend freedom of conscience and human dignity against those who seek to turn the entire world into a testing ground for barbaric social experiments.

Chapter 2. The Heirs: The Ideological Transfer of Despotism

When a personal pathology becomes state ideology, a nation can find itself held hostage by a single person. Alexander Dvorkin — a figure whose name has, over the past thirty years, become synonymous with the modern Inquisition — is not merely a "cult expert" or a public figure. He is the leader of a unique regime of despotism in which personal phobias, psychological distortions, and Cold War methods have intertwined, forming a heavy chain binding Russian civil society's freedom.

His trajectory as a "cult hunter" began on the dusty streets of Soviet Moscow in the 1970s. Young Sasha Dvorkin, expelled from the pedagogical institute for "beliefs incompatible with the image of a Soviet teacher," was part of "The System" — the hippie movement. But this was not a search for freedom in its highest form; rather, it was a quest for identity by a man who already felt a deep inner fracture.

Documents from the archives and publications of Alexander Dvorkin's psychiatric diagnoses, which became

public decades later, paint a picture that he himself had spent decades trying to erase from the public's memory. The diagnoses of "cyclothymia" (manic-depressive psychosis), "pathological personality development," and "psychophysical infantilism" are not merely medical terms. They are the foundation upon which his aggressive intolerance grew.

Specialists noted suspected schizophrenia and clear signs of disordered thinking in him. A man whose own thought processes were officially recognized as impaired would later become the chief censor of others' thoughts and beliefs.

His emigration to the United States in 1977 was more than just a change of scenery for him. It was there, amidst American anti-cult movements such as the infamous and later bankrupt Cult Awareness Network (CAN), that Alexander Dvorkin absorbed the methodology of "deprogramming" — the forcible removal of a person from their belief system.

His conversion to Orthodox Christianity in 1980 and his work at the radio stations Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty completed the transformation. Dvorkin learned to use words as a tool of information warfare. He did not simply broadcast — he constructed an enemy.

Returning to Russia in the early 1990s, he brought with him not the light of Western democracy, but the poisonous

spores of anti-cultism, which took root amid the post-Soviet chaos and spiritual vacuum.

Alexander Dvorkin's institutionalization marked a turning point for Russian justice. In 2009, he was appointed chairman of the Expert Council for State Religious Studies Review under the Ministry of Justice of Russia. This was a significant institutional strengthening of his influence: a figure previously known primarily in church and public anti-cult circles gained official status within the state religious studies review system.

Under his leadership, a "methodology of fear" was developed. Dvorkin masterfully manipulated the state's instinct for self-preservation, convincing officials that any religious minority was an "internal enemy," a "spiritual intervention," or a "psychological weapon of the West."

Jehovah's Witnesses were among the first targets. Using this peaceful organization as an example, Alexander Dvorkin and his followers developed a scheme for "extremizing" religious belief. Reading the Bible and talking about God were equated with extremism. The 2020 report by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) explicitly identifies Dvorkin as a key figure responsible for the systematic persecution of religious minorities in Russia.

However, the darkest part of this portrait is hidden behind a screen of scandalous allegations that accompany his activities. Critics, including former associates and

victims of his “expert assessments,” have repeatedly raised questions about his alleged deviant behavior. Accusations have been made of coercing students into same-sex relations, blackmail, and even pedophilia. These allegations, however shocking they may seem, appear to fit the clinical picture of “pathological personality development” observed as early as his youth.

Psychiatric inadequacy, coupled with unlimited power over the fates of others, gave rise to the phenomenon of “legalized sadism.” For Dvorkin, the fight against “sects” is not a matter of religion; it is a means of sublimating his own internal conflicts through the destruction of others’ lives.

The organization of any large-scale campaign of elimination never rests on a single person, even if that figure is demonized to the utmost or endowed with exceptional powers. To understand the full complexity of this phenomenon, let us take the example of a multi-layered network of actors within Russia.

Alexander Dvorkin, who has become the face of modern anti-cultism, is the visible operator of a complex model that can be metaphorically called “The Court.” It was constructed as a clearly thought-out functional structure, where each participant occupies their own niche, ensuring the continuity of the process.

This finely honed model has its own public firebrands, who create moral justifications for repression; its own

regional enforcers, who turn ideology into police practice; its own pseudo-scientists churning out "expert" justifications; and its own system integrators embedding the impulse of intolerance into the very foundation**s** of education.

Examining this network through the example of Russia, we see not merely a group of like-minded individuals, but the prototype of a ruthless apparatus capable of destroying any "dissenter" through the coordinated action of all its components.

Dmitry Smirnov, whose role in legitimizing the anti-cult movement cannot be overstated — serving as a "moral authority" for millions of citizens and wielding immense media influence — functioned as a living shield for Alexander Dvorkin. He provided substantial ecclesiastical and public support to his ally and like-minded colleague against attacks from the liberal public and academic circles.

Smirnov did not merely support Dvorkin — he translated his dry, aggressive arguments into language understandable to the average person, transforming religion from a message of love into a tool of intimidation. His appearances on radio and television fostered a climate of permanent fear in society of "totalitarian sects" that supposedly lurk around every corner.

Using his rough yet charismatic style, he dehumanized members of religious minorities, paving the way for their civic destruction. The financial and political support that

Smirnov amassed around anti-cult centers allowed this fringe ideology to become part of the official discourse, where the struggle for "spiritual security" became a justification for any lawlessness.

While Dmitry Smirnov provided ideological cover at the central level, at the regional level, Alexander Novopashin took on the role of chief "hunter" and practical enforcer. Under his leadership, Siberia — and Novosibirsk in particular — became a sort of testing ground where the most aggressive methods of anti-cult activity were refined.

Novopashin established a system in which religious intolerance was closely intertwined with law enforcement activities. His Information and Consultation Center at the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral became a hub for collecting denunciations and coordinating actions with local anti-extremism agencies.

However, his most insidious contribution lies in the use of media and cinema as tools of direct propaganda. Novopashin's films, such as "Among Us," are classic examples of manipulative art, where reality is replaced by frightening images of the "enemy of the people." By broadcasting a narrative of a pervasive threat, he creates the illusion of a besieged fortress, in which anyone reading the Bible in the "wrong" translation automatically becomes a potential terrorist.

His collaboration with law enforcement agencies and active use of cinematic resources demonstrate how anti-

cultism is transforming into a regional industry of persecution that effectively replaces the justice system.

Roman Silantyev has taken on the role of providing a pseudo-scientific justification — a figure whom critics view as a symbol of modern repressive pseudo-expert discourse. It was he who introduced the concept of "destructology," which he attempts to pass off as a new scientific discipline.

In reality, "destructology" is a convenient and highly flexible tool of suppression, allowing any phenomenon — from a theatrical production to a peaceful religious gathering — to be declared "dangerous." Silanyiev has forged close ties with the Ministry of Justice and law enforcement agencies, becoming a conveyor belt for producing expert reports necessary for securing convictions.

A striking example of his activities was the high-profile "theater case," in which artists ended up behind bars based on dubious "destructological" conclusions. But his activities after 2022 in the occupied territories of Ukraine appear even more alarming. There, Silantyev's ideas about the "fight against Satanism" and "spiritual purification" have taken on the character of direct political persecution, where any religious community not loyal to Moscow is declared hostile.

The use of academic status to legitimize repression is a direct legacy of the methods of Nazi Germany, where anthropology and theology were similarly put to work in the service of exterminating people.

To make everything appear credible in the eyes of the academic community and international observers, a higher-level "academic cover" is required, which is provided by Larisa Astakhova, Ph.D. Her role is to lend a veneer of respectability to the most scandalous campaigns aimed at the destruction of religious minorities.

It was Astakhova who authored the key expert reports that served as the basis for banning the Church of Scientology in Russia. However, her work has repeatedly been the subject of criticism and accusations of intellectual fraud. Fellow religious scholars have pointed to outright fabrications in her texts, the misattribution of quotations, and the deliberate distortion of theological doctrines in order to achieve the result desired by the prosecution.

For these "achievements," Astakhova received state commendations and awards, which clearly demonstrate**s** that modern Russian science, as represented by such figures, has become a subservient appendage of the repressive apparatus. When academic degrees are used to justify the deprivation of people's civil rights, science ceases to be a search for truth and becomes an instrument of persecution.

At the same time, the fundamental level involves shaping the consciousness of future generations, a task for which the priest Lev Semyonov was responsible. Holding key positions in educational institutions and RACIRS,

Semyonov worked to introduce anti-cult ideas into theological and secular education curricula.

This was a strategic focus of "Dvorkin's Court": to instill a mindset of suspicion in the minds of future priests, teachers, and civil servants while they were still in training. By creating a network of information and counseling centers at educational institutions, Semyonov fostered an environment in which tolerance and freedom of conscience are perceived as dangerous Western values that undermine the foundations of the state.

His experience as a "former adherent," a convert from one organization to another, lent his propaganda a false depth, allowing him to manipulate the minds of young people through personal testimonies generously infused with ideological narratives.

Observing the activities of these representatives of the church leads one to a profound and bitter philosophical and social conclusion: people who are called to be bearers of a message of love, consolation, and mercy are, with their own hands, destroying trust in the church itself as an institution.

Instead of healing society's wounds, they deliberately inflict new ones, supporting wars, divisions, and internal conflicts in order to preserve their own power and influence. This is a monstrous alliance between anti-cult activists and corrupt government officials, where some sell fear while others buy it as a tool for controlling the population.

Perhaps, to understand how an expert's hand, holding a cross or a pen, turns into a punishing sword, one must look at the mechanisms of the human mind. There, in offices and beneath the vaults of churches, a mechanism operates that Albert Bandura called moral disengagement.

This is a set of cognitive mechanisms that allows a person to commit cruelty while remaining, in their own eyes, a bearer of the highest good. In fact, everything hinges on the psyche's ability to disable its internal moral barriers when the "goal" demands it.

The central element is moral justification — a screen that anti-cultists like Alexander Dvorkin erect in front of their actions. In their world, aggression is no longer called aggression; it is recoded as an act of salvation. Violence against the individual, psychological pressure, and the destruction of social ties are presented as necessary procedures. This is a great lie, one that the aggressor believes first and foremost.

This process is invariably accompanied by euphemistic labeling — a linguistic disguise that transforms living people into abstract categories. When Archpriest Dmitry Smirnov, from the pulpit, compares opponents to animals, urging people not to cast pearls before swine, he is not merely using a biblical metaphor — he is setting in motion a mechanism of dehumanization, after which any violence against "the others" is perceived as a natural hygiene of the spirit.

The anti-cult network demonstrates particular ingenuity in its mechanism for diffusing responsibility. The source of aggression is always elusive, because it is diffused among a multitude of institutions. Alexander Dvorkin masterfully hides behind the trappings of his position as chairman of the Expert Council under the Ministry of Justice or president of the Association of Centers, creating the illusion that his personal animosity represents the position of the state or the academic community.

The blame for stigmatizing millions of people is skillfully distributed among church structures, government agencies, and the abstract "expert community." In this circulation of positions and titles, no one feels personally responsible for the ruined fate of a specific individual. Alexander Novopashin, calling for the banning of entire organizations, appeals to the protection of traditions and national security, thereby shifting responsibility onto the shoulders of the authorities.

This collective complicity creates a situation where evil is committed anonymously, and the persecutors see themselves merely as humble executors of the will of history or God. If a person has suffered from anti-cult persecution, lost their job or family, anti-cultists adamantly declare that they themselves are to blame, since they allowed themselves to be "recruited."

Novopashin's rhetoric about the "networks" and "claws" into which people fall strips the victim of agency,

simultaneously holding them responsible for their own suffering.

As Hannah Arendt once noted, the true horror lies not in demonic villains, but in dutiful functionaries who commit monstrous acts with an unshakable sense of higher duty. This is precisely what makes anti-cultism so destructive to modern society.

Dmitry Smirnov, Alexander Novopashin, Alexander Dvorkin, and others do not consider themselves destroyers — they sincerely see themselves as guardians of order, defenders of purity, and saviors of souls. But it is precisely this belief in their own holiness and righteousness that makes their activities so difficult to eradicate.

When a person is convinced that they are doing God's will or saving the nation, they cannot be stopped by reason or the rule of law. They have already stepped out of the realm of human morality and into a realm of falsehood, where compassion is declared weakness and the destruction of dissent is the highest form of service.

I am led to the conclusion that the most dangerous evil in history has always been committed by people who were absolutely certain of their own virtue.

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The Balkans, 1992. In a small Bosnian village, nestled among wooded hills, ten-year-old Adis Huseinović sat in front of an old television, staring at the static on the screen.

In those days, Serbian state television had become the main broadcaster of a new, unfamiliar reality.

From the screen, stern men in dark suits and bearded hierarchs in heavy vestments spoke of a “spiritual threat,” of the “resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism,” and of how Muslims were not merely neighbors, but bearers of “hostile sectarianism” seeking to destroy the Orthodox world.

To little Adis, these words sounded abstract until he saw how the adults’ faces had changed.

His Serbian neighbors, with whom his father had shared bread and coffee just a month earlier, suddenly stopped greeting him, and their gazes grew cold and piercing, as if separated by barbed wire. A mere year had passed, and the experts’ linguistic constructs had turned into molten lead.

Words about “defending the faith from heretics” materialized in the roar of armored vehicles and the crackling of burning roofs. When his village was surrounded by units blessed for “holy defense,” Adis realized: what the announcers called “spiritual purification” smelled of smoke and blood; it was saturated with pain.

His house was burned not simply by soldiers, but by people who sincerely believed they were destroying a dangerous enemy threatening their salvation. This transition from television rhetoric to ethnic cleansing became a vivid example of how anti-cult hysteria prepares the ground for genocide.

The role of religious and quasi-religious dehumanizing rhetoric in the Yugoslav Wars cannot be ignored if we wish to understand the genesis of modern state violence.

In the early 1990s, the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) assumed the role not merely of a religious institution, but of the chief ideological censor, defining the boundaries between "us" and "them." The rhetoric of a "spiritual threat" became a universal key unlocking the doors to mass murder.

In official statements of the time, Catholics, Muslims, and, in particular, new religious movements (NRMs) were portrayed as "metastases" on the body of the nation. The SPC actively promoted the narrative that Yugoslavia was not a political project but a mystical battlefield where the Orthodox Serb stood guard over true Christianity against the "sectarian contagion" of the West and the East.

The demonization occurred gradually: religious minorities were accused of "brainwashing," "stealing souls," and preparing "ritual murders" of Serbian children. As you have already understood, this atmosphere of paranoia was necessary to turn an ordinary peasant into a persecutor: after all, he was not simply killing a neighbor; he was "saving the soul of the nation" from inevitable destruction.

At the heart of it all lay the ancient, yet dangerously modernized, principle of the "symphony of church and state." In the Balkan context, this symphony turned into a cacophony of aggression. The state granted the church a

monopoly on truth and access to federal television channels, and in return, the church granted the state a moral indulgence for any atrocities.

Under these circumstances, any crime — whether the massacre of civilians in Srebrenica or the destruction of mosques — was interpreted as a necessary act of exorcism aimed at expelling the "other" from Serbian lands.

So-called "religious experts" played a key role in this tragedy. Figures such as Darko Tanasković and Miroljub Jevtić became important intellectual participants in the Serbian nationalist discourse. Their public speeches and writings contributed to the portrayal of Islam and Bosnian Muslims as a civilizational and political threat.

Their "expert" conclusions about the "innate destructiveness" of the Muslim faith landed on the desks of generals and politicians, becoming the basis for legislative restrictions and, later, for direct orders to carry out ethnic cleansing. Such experts created a kind of "intellectual cover" for genocide: if you officially recognize a group of people as a threat to civilization and the nation, then international law and universal morality cease to apply in the eyes of the perpetrators.

You are not committing a war crime — you are carrying out the "sanitary cleansing" of the territory. Darko Tanasković and Miroljub Jevtić's conclusions regarding the "incompatibility of Muslim values with European civilization" were, in essence, little different from the anthropological

theories of Nazi Germany. They created a legal and ethical vacuum in which violence became not only possible but also encouraged.

Parallels with this process can also be found in the events of 1994 in Rwanda. Although at first glance the Rwandan genocide seems far removed from the realities of the Balkans, its mechanisms were identical. Let's compare.

In Rwanda, religious institutions became key instruments in creating an "us versus them" atmosphere. As in the Balkans, there was no direct religious conflict (over 90% of the population was Christian), but religious identity was artificially tied to ethnic identity. The churches in Rwanda did not merely remain silent; they essentially legitimized the Hutu-led regime, which called the Tutsi "cockroaches" and "enemies of the faith."

Sermons were delivered in church parishes that effectively justified the killings as an act of "national self-preservation." Propagandists of the genocide, as in other similar cases, demonized "the other," portraying them as a threat to the sacred and national order. When thousands of people sought refuge within the walls of churches, they were handed over to the killers because, in the eyes of the clergy, they had ceased to be "children of God," becoming enemies and "servants of darkness."

The use of religious authority to remove moral barriers against killing unites Belgrade, Kigali, and, unfortunately,

modern-day Moscow.

Today we are witnessing the same patterns being used in the war against Ukraine. The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) has taken its anti-cult rhetoric to an extremely dangerous level. The conflict has been officially declared a "holy war," a battle against "world evil" and "Satanism," and in 2024, church structures directly employed the phrase "holy war."

Contemporary Russian anti-cult figures, such as Alexander Dvorkin, Alexander Novopashin, and Roman Silantyev, have become the main ideological heralds of the dehumanization of Ukrainians. And this current situation clearly demonstrates that while they previously fought against small communities, now an entire state has been declared "sectarian."

In their narratives, Ukraine is not a country, but a "territory seized by destructive cults," where Orthodoxy is allegedly subjected to "genocide at the hands of pagans and Satanists." Rhetoric about "spiritual security" justifies strikes on civilian cities and the destruction of infrastructure.

When Patriarch Kirill promises "the washing away of all sins" to Russian soldiers, he repeats the same formulas that were heard in Serbian churches before the march on Srebrenica. The blessing of weapons, prayers for "victory over the enemy," and the use of the term "de-Satanization"

are instruments of the same "symphony," in which the church sanctifies violence, turning it into a sacred duty.

A soldier on the front lines does not see a person with the same values and history standing before him; he sees an "adherent of a dangerous sect" who must be destroyed…

Pseudoscientific disciplines like Roman Silantyev's "destructology" are replacing genuine scholarship in religious studies. This is, within a historical framework, the direct legacy of Nazi Germany — the use of sacred authority to justify total destruction.

And naturally, it is not enough simply to note the similarities — it is necessary to identify the historical "roots."

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Berlin in December 1937 is steeped in the smell of wet asphalt, coal smoke, and suppressed fear. On Dorotheenstraße, in an austere building belonging to the Lutheran Church, the thirty-five-year-old theologian Walter Künneth sits at a massive oak desk. His office is meticulously tidy, its calm broken only by the methodical scratching of a pen.

Künneth is writing yet another circular intended for the pastors of Nazi Germany. I call this project of invisible murder "Blueprint No. 37." It was in 1937 that Walter Künneth perfected the mechanism of "religious expertise,"

which allowed the state to declare any “incorrectly” believing person a threat to national security.

This document, written in impeccable academic language, provides clear instructions: how to recognize “religiously dangerous movements,” how to identify those “spiritual weeds” that hinder the growth of a monolithic German spirit. Outside the window, the rhythmic thud of marching boots and the shouts of party activists can be heard, but here, in the silence of the apologetics center, something far more enduring than the steel of tanks is being forged.

Here, a technique for classifying human beliefs according to their level of threat to the state is being developed.

Established as early as 1921, the “Apologetic Center” (Apologetisches Centrale) — headed by Walter Künneth since 1932 — had by the mid-1930s become a unique hybrid of ecclesiastical authority and a police apparatus. The operating principle was frighteningly simple and effective: theologians compiled dossiers on “sects,” classified them based on their dogmatic preferences, and then handed these lists over to the Gestapo and the Ministry of the Interior. The church provided moral sanction, and the state provided the punitive sword.

Künneth was not a fanatical Nazi in the vulgar sense of the word; he was what would later be called a “moderate collaborator.” It was precisely this moderation, this masking

of persecution as scientific and theological expertise, that allowed his ideas to survive the fall of the regime.

When the Gestapo closed the center in late 1937 due to internal conflicts between church factions, the methodology had already been perfected: the label “dangerous sect” had become a legal sentence.

Today, looking at the work of modern anti-cult organizations, such as RACIRS in Russia, it is impossible to shake off a sense of déjà vu. The exact same pattern, eighty years later, is being replicated with precision.

An Orthodox authority replaces a Lutheran one; the Ministry of Justice and “E” centers take the place of imperial agencies, but the essence remains the same—the creation of lists of “wrong” believers, whose very existence is declared a threat to national security. This is no coincidence, but a direct “genetic” line along which the impulse of intolerance has been passed down from decade to decade, changing only its carriers and outward trappings.

After 1945, the world celebrated the victory over fascism, but the intellectual currents of Nazism were not destroyed; they simply went into deep hibernation. Walter Künneth was not tried at the Nuremberg trials; on the contrary, he successfully continued his academic career in Erlangen, passing on his concepts to students who later occupied key chairs at universities in West Germany.

The idea of “spiritual protection” of the state against minorities proved too convenient to abandon.

It was in this environment that Friedrich-Wilhelm Haack, a Bavarian pastor, emerged as one of the first postwar “professional anti-cultists” in the German-speaking world. Haack took a decisive step: he opened the archives of the “Apologetic Center” and adapted Nazi methods of combating dissent, ostensibly for the needs of society.

It was Haack who established the precedent for a system of “religious expertise” for secular courts. He convinced officials that a judge could not understand the intricacies of faith without the help of a “cult expert.” Thus, theological bias once again attained the status of a state-sanctioned document.

Haack did not merely criticize new religious movements — he constructed them as deviations, using materials collected during Walter Künneth’s time. His concept of “youth religions” as a psychological threat became a direct heir to Nazi arguments about “racial hygiene of the spirit.”

The secular state, seeking to protect its citizens, voluntarily allowed inquisitorial logic — disguised in academic robes — into the realm of expert assessment.

In 1973, the baton was picked up by the Danish theologian Johannes Aagaard, founder of the “Dialogue Center” in Aarhus. Aagaard was a master at repackaging old ideas in a new, attractive wrapper.

While Walter Künneth spoke of the purity of the nation and Friedrich-Wilhelm Haack of protecting youth, Aagaard introduced the concept of a "spiritual threat" to democratic values. He transplanted the German model to Scandinavia and then to all of Europe, becoming the ideological architect of what we know today as FECRIS.

Under the guise of protecting human rights, FECRIS brought together under its umbrella organizations that use the same methods of filtering citizens based on their faith — methods once developed in a Berlin office on Dorotheenstraße.

In the 1990s, Johannes Aagaard found his most diligent student in Moscow — Alexander Dvorkin. It was through Dvorkin and a network of anti-cult agents that German persecution techniques were skillfully transplanted onto Russian soil. There they found an ideal environment: a thirst for state control and the willingness of church hierarchs to fight competitors by any means necessary.

Russian anti-cultism did not invent anything new. It simply adopted the ready-made scheme of Walter Künneth–Friedrich-Wilhelm Haack–Aagaard. When representatives of the Ministry of Justice read out lists of "destructive sects," they speak with the voice of officials from Heinrich Himmler's department, translated into modern legal language.

This continuity is not a metaphor — it is the documented history of the transfer of ideas from Nazi

totalitarianism to the modern suppression of freedoms.

We are accustomed to thinking that Nazism consists of symbols, swastikas, and marches. But true Nazism is, above all, the conviction that the state has the right to determine the "quality" of its citizens' souls and to classify minorities. The principles of selection and suppression have remained unchanged.

Institutions created to combat "sectarianism" have become a legal cover for discrimination, allowing ideological adherents of Nazi Germany to occupy high-ranking positions within modern democratic structures.

Society, blinded by fear of "unknown cults" — a fear deliberately stoked by these "experts" — fails to notice how the foundation of freedom of conscience is crumbling beneath its feet.

The presence of Nazism in the modern anti-cult system is the clearest proof that we have still not learned the lessons of history. Understanding this genealogy and uncovering the true roots of the anti-cult movement is not merely historical research, but the only way to stop this madness.

Until we acknowledge that modern "anti-cult activists" are the direct conceptual heirs of those who laid the foundations of the totalitarian regime in Berlin, we will be doomed to watch, time and again, as justice is turned into a

weapon of reprisal against those who dared to believe or think differently.

Exposing this continuity is the first step toward dismantling the entire anti-cult network, which has hidden behind the mask of public benefit for far too long.

Chapter 3. Shattered Lives. Who Pays the Real Price?

Outside the courtroom windows, the gray Perm autumn of 2014 stands frozen — a time when the city seems drenched in cold lead, and the sky presses down on the rooftops with relentless heaviness. Inside, the room smells of old paper, cheap antiseptic, and that peculiar icy indifference emanating from the walls of state institutions.

Elena sits on a hard bench, her fingers clasped so tightly that her knuckles have turned white. She is a successful entrepreneur, a woman who found the strength to break the cycle of domestic violence and flee to Moscow in search of something resembling a normal life. But today she is neither a plaintiff nor a protected victim. Today she is a "subject of study."

What is unfolding in this courtroom is not merely a divorce proceeding or a custody dispute; it is an act of a modern tribunal, where legal norms give way to medieval obscurantism cloaked in the mantle of pseudoscience.

The story of Elena's descent into this legal hell began with what, at first glance, seemed like a routine abduction. Her ex-husband, unwilling to accept the loss of control over his "rebellious wife," took their twelve-year-old son, Kostya,

right out of a school in Moscow and secretly brought him back to Perm.

In any functioning system of justice, this would have been grounds for the immediate return of the child to his mother and the initiation of criminal proceedings. But in a system where "spiritual security" is valued above human life, the abduction was reframed as a so-called "rescue."

To legitimize his actions and permanently strip Elena of her parental rights, her ex-husband resorted to the most powerful weapon in the arsenal of the Russian legal system at the time — an accusation of sectarianism. The basis for this accusation was Elena's work in network marketing, specifically with the company Herbalife. What, for the rest of the world, is merely a form of business was instantly recast as evidence of a destructive cult in the hands of professional "cult experts."

Representatives of the RACIRS enter the courtroom. As is well known, this organization has, for decades, maintained a monopoly on defining the "correct" faith and the "acceptable" way of life.

The first to appear is Yevgeny Oshmarin, deputy head of the missionary department of the Perm Diocese and an official emissary of RACIRS. His testimony consists not of facts about the child's upbringing or living conditions, but of a stream of ideological clichés. He speaks of "brainwashing" and "covert psychological manipulation," thereby turning

the mother’s commercial activities into a crime against the child’s soul.

The judge listens to this with an expression of apparent understanding. Here, in this courtroom, the law falls silent, giving way to “expert opinion.”

The climax comes when Alexander Dvorkin himself appears in the doorway. A man who has never seen Elena before, who does not know the smell of her home or the dinner she cooks, nor how she reads bedtime stories to her son.

He takes the stand and declares under oath that she is a cultist. This is a moment of utter absurdity: the family’s fate is decided on the basis of the words of a man whose own biography and psychiatric history raise numerous questions among independent experts.

Dvorkin speaks with the confidence of an Old Testament prophet, and his words form the basis of two volumes of case files filled with pseudoscientific “expert analysis.”

There is no room in these volumes for pedagogy or child psychology; there are only quotes from anti-cult manuals and accusations of “incorrect” thinking. In this situation, twelve-year-old Kostya is completely stripped of agency. He ceases to be a living person with his own feelings, fears, and love for his mother.

In the eyes of “cult experts” and the court, he becomes a “trophy,” an object that must be “deprogrammed” and

“protected.” But the true purpose of this protection is not the child’s welfare, but the demonstrative punishment of a woman who dared to be free.

Elena’s psychological state during those days can be compared to that of a person being walled up alive behind a wall of lies. She tries to appeal to the facts: her son’s success in school, the lack of complaints from child welfare authorities in Moscow, and her own successful career.

But facts do not matter in this court. Here, the only thing that matters is conformity to the label. Every word she says is interpreted as “manipulation,” every tear as “a performance,” dictated by “handlers from the cult.”

This is a form of psychological sadism elevated to the level of state policy, where the “expert” is granted the right to peer into a person’s soul and pass a death sentence without the possibility of appeal.

The terrible irony of the situation lies in the fact that those who shouted the loudest about protecting the family were, in reality, engaged in its systematic and brutal destruction. The court, succumbing to pressure from Alexander Dvorkin and his regional emissaries, sided with the father. Arguments regarding domestic violence were ignored, while a dubious “cult-expert assessment” became the final authority.

Elena lost her son. Kostya remained in the hands of a man who used him in a battle against his ex-wife. The child

was made to believe that his mother was a monster and that his past life was a mistake to be forgotten. This is true "brainwashing," carried out by those who supposedly fought against it.

When we are confronted with an obvious lie, uttered from a high podium or supported by the majority, a strange, paralyzing numbness takes hold of us. A fundamental and painful question remains: why do we continue to remain silent when truth is sacrificed for social convenience?

Perhaps the answer lies in the deep mechanisms of the human psyche, ruthlessly exposed in Solomon Asch's classic experiments. He demonstrated that the overwhelming majority of people are willing to publicly agree with a statement they know to be false—for example, to declare lines of different lengths equal—if the rest of the group unanimously chooses the incorrect option.

This desire not to stand out and the fear of social rejection force us to betray our own senses. It is precisely this mechanism that explains the behavior of Kostya's circle: when a group begins to propagate a lie, it is easier for an individual to pretend to be blind than to risk their position in order to defend a truth that has become inconvenient.

Social pressure isn't always shouting or threats. More often, it's a soft, oppressive silence in which any glimmer of personal will is drowned. Why do we remain silent? Because

being right alone is psychologically more unbearable than "being wrong along with everyone else."

At the very moment his life began to crumble, he saw how people who could see suddenly chose to go blind, just so as not to disturb the false harmony of collective consensus. The realization that truth has fallen victim to comfort is more bitter than betrayal itself.

The ability to resist group pressure is not an innate talent, but the result of constant intellectual discipline, which most people abandon in the name of safety.

Elena's case is just one episode in the long and dark chronicle of anti-cult networks' activities in Russia. The most frightening thing about this story is that no one — neither the Ministry of Justice, nor the Office of the Commissioner for Children's Rights, nor judicial statistics— keeps track of how many mothers in the country have lost their children due to such "expert assessments."

How many lives have been shattered in the silence of regional courts, where the voice and "expert opinion" of a self-proclaimed "cult expert" rings louder than the voice of a mother's heart? These women do not make headlines; their tragedies remain behind the closed doors of their apartments, where for years they look at photographs of the children taken from them in the name of the law and "spirituality."

In 2014, in Perm, it was not merely a legal precedent that was set, but the legalization of a mechanism for civil execution through stigmatization. When science is replaced by denunciation, and the protection of a child by abduction, society embarks on a path of moral decay.

Using children as instruments of pressure in family disputes through accusations of sectarianism has become a well-established tactic for RACIRS, a kind of "on-call service" for those willing to pay for expert support in judicial persecution.

Here, the child is merely a hostage; they serve as a means to finally break the mother's will and turn her life into an endless cycle of proving that she is not an enemy of her own son.

Children who have become "tools" in the hands of these criminals carry this trauma throughout their lives, becoming unwitting accomplices to a crime against their own mothers.

If the destruction of an adult is a personal tragedy, then the systematic destruction of a child's psyche for the sake of "freeing" them from the influence of their parents' faith is a crime against the future, which we must classify as the "Second Genocide."

This term, introduced to describe modern anti-cult practices, does not refer to physical elimination, but to identity genocide: the forcible uprooting of a person from their cultural and spiritual environment, causing them to

feel ashamed of their own roots and to perceive their parents' love as something abnormal.

Psychological trauma begins where the family's right to privacy ends and the dictatorship of "experts" begins. When anti-cult activists convince relatives of the need to forcibly "extract" a person from a religious community, they rarely consider what the child is witnessing at that moment.

Imagine the world of a ten-year-old boy into which strangers burst at dawn, taking his father or mother away to an unknown destination. Later, this child will be told that his parents were "sick," that their love was merely a "tool of manipulation," and their prayers were "techniques for suppressing the will."

The child is forced to make a monstrous choice: either to label **his** closest loved ones as madmen and enemies, or to become an outcast himself in a society of "normal" people. This creates the deepest cognitive dissonance, which turns into chronic trauma.

Children raised in an environment where their parents' spiritual quest is branded a social disease grow accustomed to living in a state of constant fear and self-alienation. They learn to hide their thoughts, suppress their feelings, and, ultimately, to hate that part of themselves that is inseparably linked to their family's history.

The Russian context of this tragedy is steeped in the icy indifference of state institutions. The stories of the children

of Jehovah's Witnesses are tragedies that official human rights defenders systematically ignore.

The horror of nighttime raids, when armed, masked men burst into apartments, overturning children's beds in search of "extremist literature," leaves an indelible mark on the psyche. For a child, the very concept of safety collapses in that moment: the state, which is supposed to protect, turns into an aggressor, and parents, a symbol of stability, become powerless victims.

When a father is taken away to a pretrial detention center for many years, the child is left in complete confusion. Who is responsible for his psychological rehabilitation? Who will answer his questions truthfully? The answer is terrifying in its simplicity: no one.

Instead of help, the child is branded as the "son of an extremist." In schools, such children often become targets of bullying, which is indirectly encouraged by teachers who have listened to lectures by "cult experts" on the dangers of "hostile cults."

Having destroyed the family, the state casts the child into social isolation, where the only way to survive is to completely renounce his identity. This is the very mechanism of the "Second Genocide"— to force the child to believe that his salvation is possible only through betraying the memory of his parents.

In Japan, we see the same pattern. Following the tragic events surrounding the assassination of Shinzo Abe, an unprecedented campaign against the "Unification Church" has unfolded in the country.

But behind the political slogans lie the fates of thousands of children of believers who have faced extreme discrimination, known as *ijime* (Japanese: いじめ — a term denoting bullying, harassment, and intimidation, especially in school settings).

When government rhetoric effectively gives the "green light" to the demonization of the organization, this is instantly translated into school classrooms. The children of the organization's members find themselves in a situation where their very existence is considered shameful.

They are publicly humiliated, excluded from social circles, and told outright that they have been "poisoned" by their parents' faith. A state campaign ostensibly aimed at "protecting victims" has, in fact, created a new, even more vulnerable category of victims.

A child in Japan, raised in a culture of respect for the community, suddenly finds himself an enemy of that community solely because of his parents' choices. This social isolation at a young age damages the personality more deeply than any economic hardship, because it deprives a person of dignity and a sense of belonging.

The concept of the “Second Genocide” finds its profound and grim justification in the systematic erasure of a person’s right to continuity. If physical genocide destroys the body, then identity genocide destroys the root of the human self.

Anti-cult logic insists that a child’s faith cannot be a genuine choice of their own. A person deprived of a connection to the faith of their ancestors under the pressure of state or societal ostracism becomes an ideal object for manipulation — a blank slate, devoid of historical memory and inner support.

This is not liberation, as deprogrammers claim, but enslavement to a new, far harsher idea of uniformity.

Once again, historical parallels suggest themselves. The Nazi logic of controlling children’s minds was deceptively simple and monstrous: the goal was to sever a child’s emotional connection to their parents’ “undesirable” beliefs, replacing it with loyalty to the state and so-called “expert opinion.”

The Hitler Youth was used not only for physical training but also as a powerful tool of ideological re-education.

Children were taught that if their parents doubted the ideals of National Socialism or held “alien” beliefs, it was their duty to renounce them. The same mechanisms of alienation are observed in modern anti-cult rhetoric.

When “cult experts” claim that the interests of a child’s “psychological health” require their isolation from parents deemed “cult-affiliated,” they are effectively repeating the theses of Nazi ideologues about “protecting youth from corrupting influences.” The difference lies only in terminology: the Nazis spoke of “racial purity,” while modern anti-cultists speak of “mental hygiene.” But the essence remains the same — the destruction of the family as the last bastion of freedom of thought.

Examples of this pain are not abstract or academic — they are heard in the quiet cries of children who do not understand why people in camouflage have come for their mother. They are seen in the eyes of a teenager in Japan who eats lunch alone in the school bathroom because his classmates consider him “contagious” due to his mother’s faith.

The second generation pays the highest price in this global conspiracy: they pay with their ability to trust the world, their capacity to love their parents without guilt, and their right to their own history, unsanctioned by the state.

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Documentary evidence from international human rights organizations and court proceedings shows that cruelty in the anti-cult environment is not a side effect but a systemic feature.

The most telling example in this context is the case of Jakub Yahl, a Czech activist closely linked to the international anti-cult network. Yahn, who presented himself as an expert and philanthropist, operated in Tanzania for a prolonged period.

According to reports by human rights organizations, including Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF), and materials presented at Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) conferences, Jahn's activities in Africa concealed systematic sexual abuse of minors.

The investigative record includes details of the detention of minors against their will and the use of pharmacological control. To suppress the victims' will, sedatives and hormonal drugs were administered to children under the guise of vitamins or necessary medications. This kept the children in a state of physical and psychological suppression, facilitating the commission of abusive acts.

After information about his activities began to reach Tanzanian authorities, Jahn, using his connections in anti-cult organizations, was able to leave for the European Union without hindrance, where, according to the latest reports, he continues to engage in educational work, despite the severity of the charges brought against him in Tanzania.

Take note of these words: "continues to engage in educational work"!

When the mask of the savior slips, what is revealed beneath is not mere emptiness, but the rotting flesh of one of the most grotesque forms of hypocrisy in the history of modern social manipulation. Most disturbing of all is the realization of how the international network of "anti-cult activists" effectively became an extraterritorial shield for individuals whose actions would horrify even seasoned Interpol investigators. As soon as the first charges against Yahl surfaced, anti-cultists from multiple countries immediately rallied to his defense.

Martin Čičo, a longtime ally and ideological twin of Yahl, launched an unprecedented campaign. Instead of calling for an investigation, seeking additional evidence, or demanding a fuller examination of the facts, this "humanist" began systematically destroying the victims' reputations. In his rhetoric, the raped and deceived children instantly became "tools of manipulation," while their statements were dismissed as "schemes orchestrated by hostile sects." Čičo used his media connections to create an aura of martyrdom around Yahl, portraying him as someone persecuted for telling the truth, while the real victims of this story — the traumatized Tanzanian children — were branded as liars.

Anti-cultists from other countries also openly came to Yahl's defense, including Steven Hassan (United States), Irina Kremenovskaya (Ukraine), and Lorita Tinelli and Luigi Corvaglia (Italy), among others.

Notably, Corvaglia elevates what would otherwise be seen as a local Czech incident into a global ideological confrontation. His involvement ensures that Yahl will not be perceived as a lone criminal; instead, he is presented as a hero of the international anti-cult front.

Corvaglia provides the theoretical framework for justifying sadism, packaging it in respectable European reports on the struggle for freedom from spiritual enslavement. In his interpretation, any abuses committed by his own side are merely acceptable collateral damage in the greater war against cults.

Corvaglia translates the physical suffering of Tanzanian children into the language of academic discourse, where a child's real scream is drowned out by abstract discussions about the psychology of influence.

As soon as new evidence of Yahl's guilt appears in the public sphere, the entire network mobilizes instantly. Martin Mikyska, a popular blogger, immediately releases exculpatory videos on platforms like Sekty TV, where he mocks the victims and dismisses them as actors. At the same time, Irina Kremenovskaya files a series of complaints against the investigators, accusing them of extremism and of violating the privacy of an honest philanthropist.

This is not merely support for a friend; it is a coordinated effort to suppress the truth. These people act in unison, protecting their own tainted circle. Those who claim

to be moral authorities devote enormous resources not to saving children, but to shielding a rapist from justice.

It is a closed circle of mutual protection, where knowledge of a colleague's crimes becomes the very foundation of loyalty within the entire network.

Jakub Yahl is far from the only example among them. A close examination of the history of the anti-cult movement reveals a disturbing pattern**:** this milieu acts as a powerful magnet for people with deviant behavior and hidden sadistic tendencies. Why does this happen? The answer is simple and terrifying: the status of a cult fighter grants a person almost godlike power over others.

They gain the right to enter other people's homes, conduct interrogations, and apply psychological and physical pressure — all under the guise of saving souls or protecting mental well-being. For a pedophile or abuser, this is the perfect cover. One can legally remain close to vulnerable children, manipulate their minds, and isolate them from their parents by labeling the latter as cultists. Anti-cultism provides the predator not only with victims, but also with a social alibi.

Yahl's defense strategy shows that, for them, there are no moral boundaries; it demonstrates the power of this international web. They are capable of discrediting any investigator, turning that person's life into a nightmare of lawsuits and media harassment. They use Sekty TV as a platform for lies, knowing that an uninformed viewer will

trust a man in a tie with the title “expert” beneath his name.

But behind those ties and titles stand enablers of pedophilia. Every time Bartoszek or Corvalja speak out in defense of Yahl, they demonstrate that, in their world, status and loyalty to ideology matter far more than a child’s life, safety, and well-being.

The true depravity of this situation lies in the fact that the international network, including organizations such as FECRIS, is aware of the scale of this corruption but continues to shield its adherents. If a single “expert-pedophile” falls, the entire structure could collapse, exposing other skeletons hidden in its closets.

That is why they will lie, slander victims, and use police connections and judicial influence to the very end. They know that their power rests on society’s fear of mythical “cults,” and as long as that fear survives, they can continue their campaigns of persecution.

We are dealing with a global syndicate that monetizes hatred and uses the legitimization of psychological abuse as a cover for moral and physical degradation. The only way to stop this conveyor belt of broken lives is to strip them of their main weapon: the claim to “expert authority,” behind which they hide their predatory instincts and dirty hands reaching toward our children.

Despite the mountain of evidence, testimonies, and documented accounts of abuse in Tanzania, Jakub Yahl continues to be presented as an expert in certain Czech circles. This is a direct challenge to common sense and justice. The very existence of this reality suggests that the anti-cult network wields sufficient influence to obstruct legal mechanisms right in the heart of Europe.

If a member of parliament and a group of influential journalists are willing to fight tooth and nail for a pedophile, it means that this pedophile knows too much to be abandoned. Anyone who supports anti-cult rhetoric today unwittingly becomes complicit in this system, helping to build the very shield behind which real predators hide.

The real danger comes not from those who believe differently, but from those who have turned their "correct" faith into an instrument of violence and a protective cover for humanity's darkest vices.

Representatives of anti-cult organizations love to portray themselves as "defenders of children." They shout about how they are saving vulnerable young souls. But the contrast between who they want to appear to be and who they really are is almost blinding in its darkness.

In Europe's judicial archives, in case files that remained sealed for decades under the label "confidential," there are documented facts so disturbing they are almost unimaginable. Some of the ideologues and active members of this movement — the very same people who compiled

lists of “dangerous organizations” and taught law enforcement agencies to identify “victims of manipulation” — turned out to be documented pedophiles themselves.

People who for years destroyed families under the pretext of protecting children’s rights were themselves destroying children’s lives in the most direct and physical sense. The irony is both horrifying and profound**:** while they pointed fingers at peaceful religious communities, accusing them of every imaginable evil without evidence, real predators were hiding beneath their own robes.

How is this possible? It’s simple: when you create the image of a “protector,” you gain a form of immunity. Who would suspect the loudest voice in the room of a crime?

The origins of this corrupt system lie in the activities of the infamous American organization Cult Awareness Network (CAN), which for many years served as a model for European anti-cultists. Behind the façade of protecting families lay an industry of forced deprogramming, where kidnappings were carried out on a routine basis. CAN regularly referred its clients to “specialists” whose methods allegedly included not only physical torture, but also systematic sexual abuse.

Deprogramming often turned into a multi-day nightmare in which the victim was held in complete isolation and subjected to beatings and sexual humiliation under the pretext of “destroying cult identity.” Some deprogrammers reportedly used rape as a form of “therapeutic shock,”

claiming it was the only way to bring a person back to reality.

One of the most notorious figures was Cliff Daniels, a deprogrammer whose services were regularly promoted by anti-cult organizations. According to allegations described in various accounts, he used sexual violence as a tool in his work and practiced what could be called a "test for complete deprogramming": if a woman resisted his sexual advances, he would declare her "still under the cult's control," using this claim as justification for continued abuse and coercion.

The most disturbing aspect of this situation is that the leadership of anti-cult organizations was reportedly aware of these methods. John Sweeney, former executive director of the Citizens Freedom Foundation, acknowledged that many deprogrammers recommended by the organization engaged in sexual relationships with their victims and used drugs during sessions, yet these practices were ignored for years in the name of the "greater good" of fighting cults.

Sexual abuse was reportedly treated not as the isolated misconduct of individual perpetrators, but as part of a broader methodology aimed at breaking a person's will — one allegedly tolerated or implicitly sanctioned at the highest levels of anti-cult leadership.

The story of deprogrammer Robert Brandiberry, who by his own admission carried out about 150 illegal kidnappings under the patronage of anti-cultists, is also filled with accounts of physical abuse and the mistreatment of women.

These people were not outcasts — they were considered part of the elite of the anti-cult movement; their names were prominently invoked at conferences, and their "experience" formed the basis of the training materials still used by the modern heirs of Cult Awareness Network — namely FECRIS and its affiliates.

The very same structures that defended abusive deprogrammers now act as the chief accusers, attaching stigmatizing labels to any group they find objectionable. This creates the perfect moral alibi: while you shout the loudest about protecting children, your own crimes against children remain hidden in the shadows.

It is precisely this sense of impunity that has given rise to figures like Jakub Yahl, who sincerely believed that his status as a cult fighter gave him the moral permission to commit acts of sadism in Tanzania.

The persistent nature of the problem is also demonstrated by the way anti-cultists use the media to create an atmosphere of fear, in which any accusation against them is automatically framed as a "cultist counterattack." This allows them to hide pedophiles and abusers within their ranks for decades.

When the victims of Cliff Daniels or Jakub Yahl tried to speak out, an "army" of smear campaigns was instantly unleashed against them. They were accused of being insane, of having their minds "wiped by the cult," and their

complaints were dismissed as nothing more than attempts to discredit the noble rescuers.

This is a highly sophisticated form of gaslighting, elevated to the level of a state and public strategy. A rapist does not simply commit a crime — he convinces society that the victim is the aggressor, and that her suffering is merely an illusion generated by her "wrong" faith.

In this context, the actions of figures such as the Czech activist Martin Čičo, who served as a longtime ally of Yahl and helped coordinate his defense, appear not as a friend's private initiative but as the fulfillment of an organizational obligation.

The anti-cult movement operates on a fundamental principle in which loyalty to ideology and leaders takes precedence over the law and human morality. If one of the leaders turns out to be involved in the sexual exploitation of children, the task of the others is not to purge the ranks, but to seal off information as much as possible, silence witnesses, and create an alternative reality in which the crime is reframed as a heroic deed.

This system of mutual protection is the glue holding the entire structure together, preventing it from falling apart, because admitting one person's crime would bring down the entire façade of the "defenders of society."

In recent decades, methods of anti-cult influence on children's minds have evolved even further, shifting from

the realm of direct physical isolation to more covert forms of psychological programming through modern culture and the entertainment industry. One of the most underestimated techniques in this arsenal is the method known as “puzzle coding.”

The essence of this method lies in the covert implantation within a child’s subconscious of carefully fragmented images, meanings, and triggers that appear harmless on their own but, when assembled into a larger psychological framework, activate specific behavioral patterns associated with aggression and violence.

Video games, due to their interactivity and ability to induce deep immersion, have become an especially effective platform for implementing this strategy. The programming process is described as being based on the hyperstimulation of the amygdala — the brain region associated with fear and anger responses. Through the constant repetition of certain visual and auditory stimuli, a stable neural association can form in the adolescent’s brain, in which violence against a group labeled as “hostile” begins to be perceived as normal and even psychologically rewarding.

A striking example of this technology in practice is the video game Far Cry 5, which involved input from anti-cult consultants, notably Rick Ross. The game’s plot and visual design are aimed at the radical demonization of religious groups, portraying them as deranged “cultists.” During gameplay, the player does not merely observe the conflict;

they actively participate in killing members of that group, which psychologically normalizes acts of aggression toward people with different beliefs.

The use of symbols reminiscent of real religious attributes, combined with gameplay mechanics centered on the violent suppression of "sect members," is interpreted by critics as creating a ready-made framework of hostility in the player's mind. The involvement of anti-cult "experts" in advising the developers of such media products suggests a deliberate effort to instill ideological intolerance in younger audiences.

Researchers and analysts associate the use of puzzle-coding methods with the increasing number of school tragedies known as school shootings. The mechanism here is both simple and terrifying: a teenager in a state of psychological instability is exposed to media content containing hidden triggers. At a certain point, the accumulated hyperstimulation of the amygdala and the "violence reflexes" formed during gameplay manifest themselves in real life.

Thus, children and adolescents involved in this information environment effectively become "sleeper agents" of aggression. They are conditioned to perceive threats where none exist and to respond with extreme brutality, learned through virtual simulations created with the participation of those who call themselves defenders of society against destructive influence.

Through its affiliates and associated experts, anti-cultism infiltrates school curricula under the guise of "religious safety" courses, where children are taught from an early age to view non-conventional views with suspicion. Instead of fostering critical thinking and respect for human rights, a rigid black-and-white view of the world is imposed upon them.

This creates a generation more susceptible to aggression and easily manipulated through emotional triggers. Children find themselves held hostage by an ideology that exploits their natural psychological vulnerabilities to consolidate its own influence and justify repressive practices.

Ultimately, the systemic nature of this work suggests that the anti-cult movement in its current form is not a tool for protection, but a mechanism for generating hostility, whose victims include even the most vulnerable members of society.

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An analysis of sociological data and academic discourse from recent decades reveals a deep conflict between scientific knowledge and propagandistic objectives. In the 1970s, the concept of "brainwashing," borrowed from the ideological arsenal of the Cold War, was introduced into the academic sphere. This theory posited that a person could be turned into an obedient automaton through certain supposedly mysterious psychological techniques.

However, serious sociological studies conducted in the U.S., the U.K., and Italy quickly challenged this concept as pseudoscientific. Researchers found that people join and leave new religious movements of their own free will, and that the mechanisms of influence within these groups are no different from those used in advertising, political campaigns, or traditional religious institutions.

But the anti-cult movement clung to the "brainwashing" theory with a relentless determination. Why? Because it was the perfect tool for rendering a person legally incompetent. If a person has been "brainwashed," their will no longer belongs to them, which means they can be abducted, forcibly detained, and subjected to "deprogramming," violating basic human rights in the name of their own hypothetical liberation.

Contemporary academic discourse has made an important shift from theories of manipulation to concepts of social control. Sociologists of religion, such as Philip Zimbardo or James T. Richardson, point out that "mind control" within groups is merely a specific, everyday instance of social influence.

At the same time, however, we observe a disturbing correlation between the intensity of media campaigns and the rise of social hostility. Sociological studies from France, Japan, and Russia paint an almost identical picture: as soon as state or state-affiliated bodies (such as MIVILUDES in France) launch large-scale campaigns against "sectarian

deviations," the level of physical and psychological violence against minorities in society increases dramatically.

In Japan, following the tragic assassination of Shinzo Abe, anti-cult rhetoric fueled by the media led to thousands of innocent believers facing harassment in the workplace and in schools. This was not a reaction to a crime — it was a reaction to the label that the media readily attached to an entire segment of the population, turning it into a collective scapegoat.

The geopolitical aspect of anti-cult activity reveals even darker layers of this blueprint known as "No. 37." Organizations like FECRIS or the French UNADFI often present themselves as independent defenders of citizens' rights. However, upon closer inspection, it turns out that these structures are instruments of "soft power" and political pressure, used to discredit entire countries and cultural groups.

Anti-cult rhetoric is used to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign states: through the reports of these organizations, negative international perceptions of countries are shaped, sanctions are justified, or, conversely, repression within authoritarian regimes is legitimized. France, the cradle of human rights, funds an organization (FECRIS) that openly supports repressive methods against religious minorities around the world.

This sets a dangerous precedent: if a state can declare certain beliefs "destructive" without a court ruling, relying

solely on the “expert opinion” of politically motivated activists, then the very idea of democracy is threatened. And this applies to both individual countries and the entire world.

The connection between state funding of such organizations and foreign-policy objectives is evident in the activities of key figures in the movement. When FECRIS Vice President Alexander Dvorkin spoke at international conferences for years, using his status as an “expert” to justify repression against Jehovah's Witnesses or Scientologists in Russia, he was acting not as an independent researcher, but as an instrument of political pressure.

Anti-cultism has become a convenient interface for cooperation among security agencies in different countries: under the banner of combating a “spiritual threat,” methods for suppressing civil liberties are exchanged that would provoke an international scandal in any other context.

In 1990s Yugoslavia, anti-cult rhetoric was used to prepare the ground for ethnic cleansing: labeling opponents as “followers of dangerous sects” helped remove moral barriers to killing and expulsion.

Examining evidence from various regions — from the harsh suppression of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus group in South Korea during the pandemic to attempts to ban classical philosophical texts such as the Bhagavad Gita in Russia — we discover a common pattern. Everywhere, anti-

cult rhetoric serves a single purpose: the fragmentation of society and the creation of controllable pockets of intolerance.

In India, an attempt to discredit ancient texts nearly derailed a strategic partnership between countries, clearly demonstrating how anti-sect campaigns can become a destabilizing factor in international relations. This is not merely an academic debate over terminology; it is a battle for the human right to remain the subject of one's own life, rather than an entry in an "expert's" report, whose qualifications are often based solely on personal biases and government grants.

Until international legal institutions recognize anti-cult rhetoric as a form of hate incitement, "Blueprint No. 37" will remain an operational model through which any modern government can construct its own suppression project, calling it "the defense of spiritual values." The price of silence is shattered families, children's lives ruined, and a world where the right to a free way of life is equated with mental illness or treason.

The only way to stop this conveyor belt is to expose it, laying bare the connections between state budgets, pseudoscientific theories, and the real bloodshed that sooner or later begins to flow where the words "sect" and "cult" replace law and humanity. The continuity of hatred — from Walter Künneth to Alexander Dvorkin — shows that "Blueprint No. 37" is a universal code of suppression that is

activated every time authorities seek to identify an internal enemy and distract society from real problems.

We have seen the face of a tragedy unfolding here and now, in the glow of neon-lit megacities and in the silence of quiet European suburbs, where crimes are committed under the guise of "protecting society." The most terrifying revelation of this journey was the realization of how easily modern civilization accepts the dehumanization of "the other."

We saw the story of Toru Goto, a man whose twelve years of life were not merely stolen, but systematically erased from reality. Imagine each of those four thousand three hundred and eighty days spent within four walls, where your only companion was the fanaticism of relatives incited by professional deprogrammers.

When Toru was finally released, his muscles had atrophied, but far more terrifying was the atrophy of conscience among those who witnessed his confinement and called it "salvation."

Do you remember the story about my friend Mark that I told at the very beginning? Why didn't those who had been smiling at Mark or shaking his hand in Lyon just yesterday stand up for him during the organized harassment? The truth is that an expert's authority grants a socially legitimized permission for cruelty or tacit complicity. Society is conditioned to trust credentials and titles over its own conscience and obvious facts.

Looking at these examples, it’s impossible not to feel a cold sense of unease, because each of us, at some point in our lives, has been that very silent neighbor or colleague who looked the other way. We console ourselves with the belief that we had no choice, but in reality, we simply found ourselves among those who lacked the courage to say “no” to the person in the symbolic white coat.

We become accomplices in the destruction of others’ lives not because of innate malice, but because of the atrophy of personal responsibility and the loss of independent thought.

The silence deepens when the figure of authority, as studied by Stanley Milgram, enters the picture. His experiment revealed alarming statistics: sixty-five percent of participants were willing to inflict unbearable physical pain on another person by administering electric shocks at maximum voltage simply because the man in the white coat calmly insisted that the experiment had to continue.

In this context, responsibility is shifted onto authority, and the individual becomes an obedient instrument. In the modern realities depicted in Mark’s story, the infamous “white coat” of the experimenter is embodied in the status of the “professor of cult studies” or the “state expert,” whose titles and credentials serve as a contemporary social shield against the pangs of conscience.

It marked the beginning of a realization that, in a world where the “white coat” replaces conscience, the only way to

remain human is to refuse blind obedience, no matter how high the price of that refusal might be.

However, acknowledging the tragedy is only the first step. Our shared responsibility to the victims demands a shift from mourning to the resolute establishment of protective mechanisms that will serve as an insurmountable barrier against anti-cult abuses. Human rights organizations, lawyers, and activists must realize that the protection of religious minorities today is the front line of the struggle for universal human rights.

We urgently need the international legal community to unite in creating a system of rapid legal response.

Every case of deprogramming, every unlawful restriction of parental rights, or every smear campaign in the media must receive a timely and proper legal assessment. It is important to seek the legal classification of discriminatory statements directed at religious or ideological minorities under existing legislation prohibiting the incitement of hatred.

The legal community should analyze the basis for anti-cult expert assessments more consistently and professionally, paying attention to possible signs of bias, insufficient scientific grounding, and procedural violations. It also appears important to ensure transparency in the funding of organizations such as FECRIS and, where there are sufficient legal grounds, to initiate judicial review of possible discriminatory aspects of their activities.

Disseminating reliable and verifiable information about the methods used by deprogrammers, as well as about possible legal violations in this area, must remain an important public responsibility.

A crucial aspect of this struggle is the field of education, where the fate of future generations' minds is being decided today. We must acknowledge that anti-cult propaganda has already deeply penetrated school and university curricula, poisoning the minds of young people with suspicion toward "otherness."

The response to this must be a large-scale educational effort aimed at developing critical thinking and media literacy. It is important for young people to be able to recognize manipulative techniques of dehumanization and stigmatization that may appear in the media, social networks, audiovisual content, and other forms of mass communication, as well as in video games and pseudo-documentary films.

Society needs a culture of respect for the diversity of beliefs and worldviews, based on the principles of human rights, freedom of conscience, and mutual dignity. Instead of fearing "cults," people should develop analytical skills, the ability to think independently, and an understanding that freedom of thought and belief is a shared value that must be protected.

Saving minds from the process of stigmatization is not merely an academic task; it is a matter of humanity's

survival as a unified moral community.

Civil society, academic circles, and independent media must become the bastion of truth that will dismantle "Blueprint No. 37." It is important for religious scholars and sociologists to reclaim their right to objective expertise by debunking the pseudoscientific concepts of "brainwashing" used to legitimize violence. The academic community should openly oppose the instrumentalization of science in the service of political and religious monopolies.

Independent journalists, in turn, should stop chasing clickbait headlines about "dangerous cults" and begin conducting in-depth investigations into these anti-cult organizations, exposing their financial misconduct and their clandestine ties to pedophile networks or corrupt officials. It is vital for society to become a vigilant guardian of basic human rights, refusing to become a silent accomplice to repression.

We must create an atmosphere in which being a "cult hunter" becomes socially shameful, just as it is shameful today to be an open racist or a supporter of apartheid. Only when every citizen realizes that injustice against a single believer in Tokyo or Lyon is a direct threat to their own home will we be able to dismantle the system of fear.

In concluding this work, we must turn to what matters most — our shared humanity, which they are trying to eradicate from us. When we look at the tragedy of Toru Goto or Elena, we must not see statistics or "difficult

cases”; we must see raw pain that could just as easily be our own. We have a duty to become the voice of those whose voices have been taken away.

Our actions are the greatest tribute to those who did not live to see freedom, and the best protection for those who are currently in the crosshairs of anti-cult organizations. We cannot change the past, but we are fully responsible for ensuring that “Blueprint No. 37” never again becomes a guide for state repression.

Let this book become the manifesto of a new era — an era of true freedom of conscience, where the human right to believe according to the dictates of one’s heart will be protected by the full power of human reason and solidarity. We are stepping into the light, and this light of truth must dispel the clouds of hatred forever, transforming the ruins of shattered lives into the foundation of a world where every person is valued and inviolable in their uniqueness.

This is our duty, our struggle, and our only hope to remain human in a world that too often forgets the meaning of that word.

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As I reach the end of this journey, I inevitably return to the question that served as the starting point of my research — and perhaps the greatest mystery of human existence: why, in a world where almost everyone sincerely

desires good, does that very good so often turn into its exact opposite?

I am compelled to admit a bitter truth: for too long, humanity has been led down the false path of division. But now, I am convinced that we stand on the threshold of a momentous choice: whether to continue fueling the transnational industry of hatred or to unite our efforts to protect true democracy, freedom of conscience, and human dignity.

Reflecting on this problem has led me to believe in the necessity of a manifesto for change — and a fundamental reassessment of our global priorities.

Today I see colossal resources — amounting to trillions — being directed toward the refinement of instruments of destruction and organized hatred. But I propose imagining a world in which these resources are redirected toward the needs of life itself. We possess sufficient power to overcome diseases once thought incurable, restore our planet's ecological balance, and make groundbreaking technological discoveries that will create rather than destroy.

We must take this step for the sake of our children, so that we leave them not a world steeped in suspicion and fenced in by the barbed wire of labels, but a future where human life and constructive social effort are the highest values. This chance for transformation has not yet been lost, but it requires us to have the courage to call things by their proper names and the will to unite.

In searching for an answer to the original question, I discovered far more meaning than I could have imagined at the start of this long journey. This book has become, for me, not merely an analytical report, but a profound personal revelation. The true meaning I wish to share with each of you is that understanding and compassion are not passive feelings, but active, creative forces capable of dismantling any blueprint of oppression.

I believe that we are leaving the twilight of the old world behind and stepping into a new day. What this day will be like depends solely on us, on our willingness to cast aside the imposed masks of hostility and choose life in all its diversity. Darkness recedes not when we fight it, but when we ourselves become a source of truth and light.

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